

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A process for removal of the esterification catalyst by separation from a crude plasticizer ester obtained by reacting a dicarboxylic acid with C₈-C₁₃ alcohols, by treating the crude ester with an aqueous alkali solution in the range from 10 to 100°C and then separating the aqueous alkaline phase comprising the hydrolyzed esterification catalyst by gravitational phase separation, which comprises treating the crude ester, prior to or during the phase separation, with a salt of a di- or polyvalent metal, or with a mixture of these salts.
2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the esterification catalyst used comprises a Lewis-acid compound of an element of the 4th main group or of the 4th transition group of the Periodic Table of the Elements.
3. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~claim 1 or 2~~, wherein the esterification catalyst used comprises a compound of titanium.
4. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~, wherein, prior to the gravitational phase separation, the crude ester has a content of from 0.1 to 5% by weight of monosalt of dicarboxylic half-ester.
5. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~, wherein the salt used of a di- or polyvalent metal comprises a calcium salt or aluminum salt.
6. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein use is made of an aluminum salt.
7. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the amount of aluminum salt used is from 0.05 to 30 mmol per liter of the aqueous alkaline phase.

8. (New) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the esterification catalyst used comprises a compound of titanium.
9. (New) A process as claimed in claim 8, wherein, prior to the gravitational phase separation, the crude ester has a content of from 0.1 to 5% by weight of monosalt of dicarboxylic half-ester.
10. (New) A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the salt used of a di- or polyvalent metal comprises a calcium salt or aluminum salt.
11. (New) A process as claimed in claim 10, wherein use is made of an aluminum salt.
12. (New) A process as claimed in claim 11, wherein the amount of aluminum salt used is from 0.05 to 30 mmol per liter of the aqueous alkaline phase.
13. (New) A process as claimed in claim 11, wherein said dicarboxylic acid is with C₈-C₁₁ alcohols.
14. (New) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the esterification catalyst used comprises titanium alkoxylates.
15. (New) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the esterification catalyst is Ti(O-ethyl)₄, Ti(O-isopropyl)₄ or Ti(O-isobutyl)₄.